

Emotional Intelligence Management @ Workplace

***T Latha Chakravarthi**

**** Dr T Kalyana Chakravarthi**

ABSTRACT

It is quite common to think of ourselves as balanced individuals. But our lifestyles ensure that most of our working hours are occupied, at home, at work and the remaining time left is consumed in commuting. This often makes us feel overwhelmed and exhausted. It leads to reactions that are not expected from us and surprisingly uncontrollable, even in very ordinary situations- reactions those are not appropriate, especially at work. Every workplace has conflicts, but how the employees and the organizations tackle these goes a long way in ensuring the success of the employees as well as the organization.

This paper focuses on Management of Emotional Intelligence at workplace by employees. Emotional intelligence is the vital ability that you have to develop if you want to solve personal, business and social issues in a more effective way. There has been a lot of confusion regarding the exact meaning of this word 'Emotional Intelligence'. The topic of Emotional Intelligence at workplace has become such a thought probing topic to the HR professionals in organizations that they are in search of a real big solution to control the imbalances that this word creates at workplace. Here is a focus to see what are the common factors that affect employees to lose their control on emotions, the real trouble of not being able to control emotion at the first place and what is the impact of Emotional Intelligence on the productivity of different individuals at workplaces.

"There is only one corner of the universe you can be certain of improving... and that's your own self." Aldous Huxley

Introduction

"Emotional intelligence is the ability to sense, understand, and effectively apply the power and acumen of emotions as a source of human energy, information, connection, and influence."
— Robert K. Cooper. Ph.D.

* Faculty Member, HR and Soft Skills, AMITY Global Business School; Hyderabad

** Faculty – Business Communication and Soft skills, IBS, Hyderabad

Emotional Intelligence (EI), often measured as an Emotional Intelligence Quotient (EQ), describes an ability, capacity, or skill to perceive, assess, and manage the emotions of one's self, of others, and of groups. It is a relatively new area of psychological research. The definition of EI is constantly changing.

There are a lot of arguments about the definition of EI, arguments that regard both terminology and operationalizations. The first published attempt toward a definition was made by Salovey and Mayer and (1990) who defined EI as "the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions."³

Despite this early definition, there has been confusion regarding the exact meaning of this construct. The definitions are so varied, and the field is growing so rapidly, that researchers are constantly amending even their own definitions of the construct.

Typically, "emotional intelligence" is considered to involve emotional empathy; attention to, and discrimination of one's emotions; accurate recognition of one's own and others' moods; mood management or control over emotions; response with appropriate (adaptive) emotions and behaviors in various life situations (especially to stress and difficult situations); and balancing of honest expression of emotions against courtesy, consideration, and respect (i.e., possession of good social skills and communication skills).

It is widely known that people leave people in the organizations.

In real meaning, EQ is the pattern of how people's biases in their thinking leads them to think one thing or choice is better than another, as well as their clarity in differentiating within those biases to exercise clear and sound judgment. It is true that, if you are aware of your thoughts and actions you will be able to control and direct your action in a more quick and effective way to resolve any issue. But most people don't have idea of their attitudes and thoughts that they think they are "the way they are" and there is no way to change. They become rigid in their thinking and react to situations without any thought process. They do not realize that the opposite person may also react differently, which would ultimately hamper the normalcy especially at work. These situations also hamper the personal relations, create stress on both parties, and decrease the speed of the work, delay to attain individual goals and finally causing damages to the Organizational goals.

Red Barber's words, "*People see what they want to see*" are apt here with reference to the above-mentioned facts.

Possible root causes for emotional outburst of employees at workplace

● Sensitive person

If an employee of a department is sensitive, even if a small issue arises, s/he would react to it in an emotional way which would spoil the atmosphere of the organization.

Says Rubin, a Public Relations Officer in a reputed Construction Company, "When I wear a shirt of my choice and which is good, how does it matter for the other colleagues who walk up to give a strange or absurd comment."

"One of my colleagues told me on one occasion that I look like a cowboy in front of the others, which left me angry and was disturbed the whole day thinking about why he had to do so."

● **Misunderstanding between people**

This is one of the areas which is most frequented in every spear of life. Misunderstanding might happen when either one of the parties are not in a mood to listen to the said topic, or is pre-occupied with other thoughts in mind, which leads to EI.

Rohan, a Executive in Finance Department of a start up IT Company says, "Why should I do the work of other colleague when the employee did not mention anything about it when he went on leave. But my boss says that my colleague has already told that I would comply with the task even before confirming from me."

"This is not fair. I was not comfortable with this and I refused to do the job outright as this was a repeated twice before."

According to a Chinese proverb the saying goes, "*Be not disturbed at being misunderstood; be disturbed rather at not being understanding.*"

● **Miscommunication between people**

This may occur if the communication channel is not clear, or the listener perceives it in a wrong way, which leads to an Emotional outburst.

Says Suresh, an Accounts Officer of a Manufacturing Company, "As I was not keeping well, I had to call up office and left a message with the board because my boss had not come in. But the operator did not give the message to my boss but instead left a message with a new admin who forgot about it. So, I had to listen it all from my boss the next day."

"Though I told him the truth he was not ready to listen to it, so this made me upset initially and later I burst out in front of many colleagues."

According to Erich Fromm "*Man's main task in life is to give birth to himself, to become what he potentially is. The most important product of his effort is his own personality.*"

● **Excessive workload**

In most organizations, the management feels their departments are adequately staffed and dump a lot of work to the employees. When the employees find themselves multitasking and working long hours, sometimes late into the nights, the fatigue gives way to irritability in the long run.

Says Sandeep, a 40 year old Deputy General Manager in an IT company in Hyderabad, "My job involves 12 to 14 hours and sometimes 14 to 16 hours of work daily which results in pressure which sometimes becoming difficult to handle. I tend to snap at colleagues, team members and others when they don't comprehend what I am driving at."

According to Malcolm S. Forbes, "*If you have a job without any aggravations, you don't have a job.*"

● **Work-life balance**

The ups and downs one faces in their personal life occupy their mind in some way or the other, even when at work. This would certainly disturb the balance between personal and professional life.

"It becomes difficult to concentrate on work when I think of my two years old child being sent to play school at 7.30 am when he is sick. And to imagine him suffering till the time I go home at 6.30 pm," says Mishti, a Bhubaneshwar based HR Head in a Consulting Firm.

"I used to feel like crying all the time. All the pent up frustration started showing up in the form of extreme reactions towards peers, seniors and juniors," she adds.

According to Hillary Rodham Clinton, "*Our lives are a mixture of different roles. Most of us are doing the best we can to find whatever the right balance is . . . For me, that balance is family, work, and service.*"

● **Organizational Politics**

The cheap politics played by colleagues in the organization could really disturb the mind of an employee to the maximum. This could hamper the interpersonal relations between people and ultimately could even make the employee resign.

Says Nandu, a senior faculty in a Engineering College, "One of my colleague who is junior to me, seemed to be fine in front of official gatherings and even at Faculty meetings. But I never knew that he was backbiting me in front of the Director on professional issues. No sooner I got the clue of this, I was really perturbed and even went to the extent of exchanging heated words with him on other issues."

According to Anais Nin, "*From the backstabbing co-worker to the meddling sister-in-law, you are in charge of how you react to the people and events in your life. You can either give negativity power over your life or you can choose happiness instead. Take control and choose to focus on what is important in your life. Those who cannot live fully often become destroyers of life.*"

● **Non cooperation in Team**

Team Building is most sort after in organizations. But how far it is successful is the question.

When intellectual thoughts are not met equally by the other person or received correctly, emotion plays its role.

Manish, a Manager, Training & Development in a Consultancy Firm says, "It was so frustrating to see that my team members were not in a state to accept the idea that I gave as an experienced person. The idea given by me was good by its standards and well-accepted elsewhere. So this really made me go mad at the situation and I had a heated exchange of words which ultimately resulted in the team accepting the idea but with force."

● **A Rigid Boss with traditional views**

The present corporate scenario portrays Managers as being Modern in their approach to problems and also trains the budding employees to be modern in their outlook towards work. And if your boss is a traditional one in contrast to the training being given, the situation becomes volatile.

Tanushree, a Deputy Manager in a Retail Mall says, "Every time I want to do something innovative in my work, my boss wants me to first get the approval of it in written and then accomplish it. Even when I come up with a draft of the idea in written, he would do some minor changes and not talk about it for few more days' time until he loses the draft. He makes me work all over it again."

"This really irritates me to the fullest and makes me very moody with the other colleagues, and I start feeling overworked."

According to Charles Erwin Wilson quotes, "*A good boss makes his men realize they have more ability than they think they have so that they consistently do better work than they thought they could*"

● **Foolish misjudgment and assessment by superiors/juniors/colleagues**

Unnecessarily transfer of one employee from branch office to HQ undermining others seniority, skills, efficiency etc.

Says, Sikhsha, a HR Manager of an Insurance Firm, "There is no possible reason for the management to not cancel my deputation and take me back to the HQ, when in the first place I was not told why I was deputed to the branch office in spite of being a good performer and well received by all."

"But in front of me another colleague of mine was taken into the HQ undermining my capabilities. This really de-motivated me and left me disinterested in work and stressed."

● **Other factors**

"Ethical malpractice in the company, too, can be a stress-generating factor for an employee," Anu adds. More so if the person is new to the job or has very few years of experience.

Some other factors, according to Puja, are as follows

- ❖ Mismatch between one's skills and the assigned profile
- ❖ Difference in expectations from the job and the actual profile assigned
- ❖ Underperformance by team members
- ❖ Job insecurity
- ❖ Inability to fit into a team either due to own lack of effort or resistance from team
- ❖ Lack of a support system at office
- ❖ Attitude issues with certain colleagues

All of these situations cause stress, sometimes for long periods, which manifests in the form of a sullen or rude approach to interactions with other people.

According to EQI.org, "*Unmet emotional needs cause the majority of problems at work.*"

Can Emotions be managed at workplace?

As doctors say "Prevention is better than Cure". Preventing negative reactions to situations is the best way to be successful in life and in work place. If you don't control your emotions, they will control you. Some effective methods of reducing emotional stress:

- ❖ Take a break from work to go to outstation spots

Taking a break from the regular, hectic and monotonous work schedule is the best way to distract your self from all the hush and huff of the office.

People go to different places / holiday spots / outstation sight seeing places to spend their time with family/ dear and near ones just to do nothing and lazy around. This would really create wonders to the person as they really start thinking about themselves and their pleasures and be back totally rejuvenated.

- ❖ Use weekends to get away and relax

Utilise your weekends to travel to even nearby holiday spots. Weekends does not just meant to sleep at home, visit colleagues, pay bills, run pending errands, or do groceries.

But we hear people say, I am not much of a traveller and generally spend my weekends catching up with household work or tending to my personal accounts.

Try a change of place. And trust me, it really works.

- ❖ Share work problems with your spouse/ partner / close friend

If you have a working spouse, he/she would understand the problems you are facing at work instantly. Even if your partner doesn't work, s/he will have a fair understanding of your mindset and what bothers you and for what reason.

Spouses are generally good confidants/confidantes. Giving vent by talking is a safety valve and it will prevent you from even being a passive participation in office politics.

❖ Form your own support system

Build a rapport with someone you are comfortable with at office. Creating healthy friendships helps to de-stress during breaks. This brings emotional stability and the vigor to get back to work.

It also helps to understand the organization culture better since you share work-related experiences with a colleague.

❖ Communicate

Communicate with your boss and clarify your role. Make him think about the problem that you face and compel him to help you. It is a far better option than keeping it within and getting de-motivated / under estimating yourself.

❖ Delay your reaction

Delaying your reaction to disturbed situations gives you enough scope to think better and clear. The importance to think before you speak cannot be overemphasized. A measured reaction also ensures that you speak calmly when you do speak.

Though advising is easier than followed, it is better to choose your words carefully when you speak, ensuring that you don't hurt the sentiments of the person opposite you. You can later analyze the situation and find the solutions to what has troubled you.

❖ Leave the place of disturbance without speaking much

The simplest technique can be to just vacate the place and come back to it at a later point of time with a clear set of mind.

❖ Time management

Work smart is the proverb of today's smart employees. Use productivity tools to speedup your work. More available time can help you stay relaxed. Use of computer in areas where written / rewritten work can be avoided can save much of your time.

❖ Work on your PR skills

It is not just important to work hard. It is also important to manage your relations at work better. If you succeed in creating positive vibes and make your surroundings lively (where you spend virtually all your working hours), you will find your efficiency increased manifold.

❖ De-stress at work

Many companies nowadays provide facilities to their employees like game rooms, gyms, etc. Even if that is not possible, one can always meditate, do breathing exercise etc sitting in his or her cabin. Physical exercises are cathartic media and help to relieve stress. So, when the person comes back to his desk, he is fresh and uses half the time to finish the same work.

Conclusion

Keeping a rein on your emotions while at work goes a long way in achieving healthier relations. It will also bring professional growth. Emotions can be controlled provided you really want to do so. As emotions can be ruining to both you and the other colleagues of the department which could also influence on your work spear. Your creativity that could be of real value to all would die away and you would be known to have negative qualities. A little bit of thinking and rethinking on the critical issues coming in your way at workplace could really give a relief in maintaining your self esteem and be known as a effective team player, good employee and a resourceful person in your organization. The situation can be handled carefully and cleverly. It is also high time for the management, colleagues irrespective of their age, service, sex, status, experience etc to recognize the importance of EI, to take equal responsibility of controlling the situation and to keep check of their emotions under control before a spark grows to a big fire.

Reference

Emotional intelligence (EQ), <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence and Social Intelligence: The New Science of Human Relationships*, 185-189.

IT People Evolve, <http://www.itpeopleindia.com/20031215/management1.shtml>

Neelima Chimnani, *Control your emotions at work*, rediff News

NaukriHub, <http://www.naukrihub.com/hr-today/workplace-politics.html>

http://www.susandunn.cc/emotional_intelligence_quotations.htm